

The Seraph of Kitsch



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Part Two:

The Angel of Eden

The ripple formed the vague shape of ethereal wings. Green wings. In their hazy midst, The Artist could make out faint images and figures. He saw rolling gardens, coiling serpents, and trees burdened with bloated apples. He could see naked creatures clothing themselves, the temptations of mortals, and the loss of paradise. He could see beautiful days and blissful nights, suns and moons, and above all, the kiss of a traitor.

Then, the ethereal wings flapped and a woman melted into reality before them. She was naked. Her eyes flashed a vibrant green. Her form was fertile and healthy, coloured in the likes of a tribal goddess. Her lips were red, her hair green. However, on a second observation, it was not hair at all. Her head was framed by a coiling mass of serpents, which writhed about atop one another and whispered into her ears.

The Angel of Eden locked her icy green eyes with The Artist and smiled. Her smile was terrifying, like a serpent unhinging its jaws. "You summon me?" she asked, pulling her bedazzling wings closer to her alluring form.

The Angel slithered forwards, her hips swaying seductively, her every movement punctuated by a serpentine grace. "It has been a long time since your kind has called to us," she continued in her sickly sweet, but somehow icy, hiss of a voice.

The Artist stood there, transfixed by the emerald creature. His eyes twitched in pure shock, and a cry of fright was frozen upon quivering lips. The wings of the strange creature flashed and swirled like vortexes, showing him the vestiges of paradise and sin.

"Oh my..." The Artist mumbled. "You are real..."

The Angel of Eden laughed. It was a strange laugh. It coiled around her tongue like a snake. "Afraid so," she said.

"You're an angel," The Artist did not phrase it like a question. He knew, with a certainty that defied creation, that this creature was an angel.

"Well, to your eyes, yes," The Angel of Eden said. She

splayed her arms and wings, "I am The Angel of Eden, The Emerald Sister, The Seraph of Paradise." The snakes atop her head writhed and hissed.

The artist took in a shaky breath and took a small step towards the clandestine being.

One of the snakes whispered in Eden's ear.

"What be your name?" she asked. Before The Artist could reply, Eden cut him off. "No! Never mind... Your name is irrelevant. It's just a form, a shadow..." She took a sensual step towards him. Slowly, one of the snakes slithered towards The Artist and hissed into his ear.

The Artist clenched his eyes and cringed against the snake's advance.

"You're an artist," The Angel of Eden crooned. "Well, how I've missed your kind!"

"I am," The Artist said slowly.

"Why have you invoked our rite?" The Angel of Eden asked, beginning to slowly encircle her summoner.

"I have a problem, and I'm told you can fix it," The Artist said slowly.

"Really?" Eden hissed. "I don't know what mortal problem one could experience that would warrant summoning us." She made a full circle around the stunned man.

The Artist fought to keep himself from staring at the angels exposed breast, but found meeting her gaze an eerie prospect. "I, um, was told there'd be seven of you," he said.

Eden's snakes hissed amongst themselves. "My siblings will be coming, in time. Some of them, at least. But there is a protocol to this sort of thing. The rite calls us forth in age order."

"You're the eldest?" The Artist asked, cringing as he attempted small talk with the ethereal, eldritch, creature.

"No," The Angel of Eden said dismissively. "But Brother Asphodel never concerns himself with mortal affairs. He's far too busy, The Grey Brother... The Seraph of Death... He takes those tasks very seriously... But me, on the other hand, I find you organics and your flailing rather amusing."

Her wings blossomed behind her, and showed The Artist

a psychedelic haze of naked women, plump apples, and writhing, whispering snakes.

“Besides, what would I be without your kind? Without your lusting and your desires... Without your sins and your temptations?”

The Artist continued to gaze into the beguiling, misty wings. He could see rolling fields, a lone apple tree, and two apes holding each other in impassioned embrace as blood rained down around them.

“Focus mortal,” The Angel of Eden snapped, coaxing The Artist out of his stupor. “You summoned me for a reason, I trust.”

He nodded. “Y-yes,” he stammered.

Eden looked down at him and fluttered her eye-lashes. The snakes atop her head coiled around her, their dozen upon dozens of eyes boring into The Artist. “Go on,” she crooned.

“I,” The Artist said slowly. “I can’t paint,” he admitted finally.

The Angel of Eden let out a harsh cackle and her snakes recoiled in shock at the sound. “I’m sorry?” she asked.

The Artist averted his gaze and felt his face flush scarlet. “I need ideas, inspiration, something! I’m an artist who can’t paint! Everything is stale and wrong and-”

Eden’s snakes hissed in her ear and she walked past the artist and came to admire the painting set upon his easel. “You seem to be doing a remarkably good job of it for someone who can’t paint,” she cut in.

The Artist’s words caught in his throat and he turned his attention to the painting. To the beautiful maiden peeling away her face.

The Angel of Eden gazed down at the painting for a moment longer, then turned her head to gaze back at her summoner. She bit her tongue seductively. “She’s pretty,” The Angel crooned.

The Artist felt his face grow redder.

“She’s based on someone, isn’t she?” The Angel continued, barely containing a leud smirk. “They always are, there’s no shame in it. You artist types are all the same. Your heroes are always you, in some shape or form, and your villains are often the same...” She laughed. “But the romance, the pretty things, they’re nearly always

based on someone you fancied, at some point.”

The Artist sheepishly met the gaze of one of Eden’s snakes.

“It’s okay, darling,” The Angel continued, “you can tell me.”

“I’m not a writer,” he said finally. “I don’t have heroes or villains.”

“Nonsense,” The Angel of Eden said, waving a naked hand. “All art tells a story.” She caressed her chin and gazed back down at the painting. “What’s wrong with it?” she asked. “Most creatures could never hope to paint something as beguiling as this?”

“It’s all wrong!” The Artist exclaimed, coming to stand beside the angel, gingerly stepping around her ethereal wings. “There’s no passion. There’s no spark! There’s no vibrance to its sensuality, nor anything remotely controversial about the gore and-”

“Darling, it’s lost its charm because you are getting old.”

“I’m not old,” The Artist said indignantly.

Eden and all thirteen of her snakes flashed him a condescending look.

“I’m 26,” he added.

“You’re getting older,” The Angel of Eden compromised. “To a mayfly you are unfathomably old. To a child you are older than sin...” She trailed off. Her snakes writhed about and hissed into her ears. “However,” The Angel said slowly, “to me you are barely an insect. Well actually, I’d say you’re closer to a bacteria. Tiny, but not unimportant...”

“Can you help me?” The Artist snapped.

“What do we think, my pretties?” The Angel of Eden asked her horde of snakes.

A chorus of hissing ensued.

“I can show you,” The Angel of Eden said slowly. “I can show you what you are missing. I can show you the essence of life, and by extension art. I can show you all the things I have dominion over... That should be inspiring enough. It was for Eve, at any rate.”

The Angel of Eden turned around and strode into the centre of the room. She stood there, in all her sexual exhibition, and splayed both arms and wings wide. The ethereal canvas of her wings bloomed, and a slideshow of temptation met The Artist’s gaze in an instant. The snakes affixed to her head slithered and hissed,

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and slowly, The Seraph of Paradise outstretched a hand.

“Take my hand, Artist,” she said, “and come with me.”

The Artist inched forward and gingerly took Eden’s icy hand in his.

Then, The Seraph flapped her wings, and reality fell away.

The Artist found himself tumbling through a frigid, inky darkness. All around him, the darkness swirled and ebbed. It lapped at his flesh and enveloped him like a lake of syrup. He tried to scream but found he could not. He could not move at all. He tumbled, through the nebulous void that rested between the worlds, an icy hand still clutching his. He caught sight of The Angel of Eden. However, now she appeared to be naught but a blazing comet of green energy burning in the dark.

Then, The Artist saw that there were other things in the darkness around him. Horrid things. All around him, fell monsters lurked and slithered, shying away from the blazing trail Eden left in their home. In addition, dotted about the void were blurs of colour. Some colours The Artist recognised, others he did not, and he quickly found his mind bending, fighting against the powers of impossibility to remain sane.

The Angel of Eden then began to steer them towards one such blur. The one she approached was a mix of rich greens and deep blues. In a matter of moments, they barreled into it, and they were enveloped by a nexus of warm light...

Two ethereal patches of wing-shaped energy appeared on the plains of Eden. At the apex of a lush hill, the wings winked into existence. In their midst, images began to swirl. Images of plump apples, coiling snakes, and naked lovers. Then, the wings flapped, and two figures melted into being. Attached to the wings was the naked monarch of Eden. Her head of snakes writhed and hissed as they took corporeal form once more, and her soft toes flared as they were embraced by the lush grass.

Holding the hand of The Angel of Eden was The Artist. He let out a cry of shock as reality rushed back to catch him, and he tumbled onto the grassy hill. Eden let his hand fall away from hers, and The Artist felt soft tussles of grass come to caress his cheek. He

just lay there, breathing deeply, relieved that the horrid, inky darkness had abated.

Slowly, he pressed himself back up onto his hands and knees. He looked around and saw that he was now kneeling upon a lush hill in a verdant, gorgeous garden of some kind. It stretched on far into the horizon. Fields of lush, sweet grass, orchards of trees ripe with plump apples, and the smell of nectar was carried upon a warm wind. He could hear birds singing above him, and snakes slithering in the long grass to his side.

Suddenly, he felt his stomach roll, and he bent over and began puking. Whiskey-scented vomit made mass exodus from his stomach, past his teeth, and onto the luscious grass. The Artist gagged and wretched, and finally sat back and wiped stray bile from his mouth.

He looked up at The Angel of Eden. She stood there, staring out at the clear blue sky and the rolling fields of green. Her emerald eyes crackled with power here, and slowly, her wings began to take a solid shape behind her. Slowly, scales pressed themselves into reality and covered the ethereal gateways. With a flap of the wings, they became fully realised and corporeal, adorned with scales the same green as her snakes.

The Angel of Eden looked down at her companion. “Welcome to Eden,” she said, her voice carrying itself with an other-worldly grace in this realm.

The Artist slowly pushed himself to his feet, said feet coming to be enveloped by the devilishly soft grass.

“This is Eden?” he stammered, taking in the view. The sun was a perfect warmth, no clouds blotted the sky, but yet all the mass of vegetation was perfectly healthy and coloured in the most gorgeous of natural hues. “As in, the Eden?”

The Angel of Eden shrugged. “This is but a shadow of the true Eden,” she said. “Much like me, but yes, this is The Garden.” She gestured to the abject beauty that surrounded them.

“What happened?” The Artist continued, “how did we get here?”

“We flew.”

“What was that place? The place before? The Darkness?”

“The Void,” Eden answered. “The dead space between worlds. The proto-zone. The land of Urs and monsters.”

The Artist let out a shaky breath. “Why are we here?”

“You seek inspiration,” The Angel of Eden said coldly. “Are you yet inspired?”

The Artist let out a whistle and spun around. “It’s pretty,” he said slowly.

“Come,” Eden said. “I shall guide you through this realm. You will see all that makes up Paradise. We will travel to the centre of my world, and there you can see. And you may find an answer to your question.”

“The centre?” The Artist asked.

“Yes,” The Angel of Eden said. “I will take you to The Tree of Knowledge.” With that, she began to walk down the hill, her naked hips swinging alluringly.

The Artist fought to keep his gaze from them, then continued after his angelic guide. The sun of Eden beat down upon The Artist, but it was neither harsh, blinding, nor burning. It simply warmed his flesh. To compliment the glow of the sunshine, a faint breeze drifted past and brushed the thick tussles of The Artist’s hair away from his eyes. He let out a laugh and looked around.

The Angel of Eden cast a glance back to him and smiled. “As I said, paradise.”

The Artist nodded. “Yeah,” was the only word his lips could conjure.

The Seraph of Paradise laughed. “Observe the garden, artist. Observe and be inspired.”

The two of them fell back into silence. A silence punctuated only by the tweeting of pretty little birds and the slithering of concealed snakes. The meadow gave way to a small glade, and the two of them began to traverse a soft pathway, shielded by the gentle embrace of a canopy of leaves.

Flowers bloomed beside the trail. Bold, pretty things, with juicy petals and rich nectar. Eden’s snakes licked their lips at the smell, and wriggled about on her head, trying to get closer to the scent. The Artist felt his eyes close and he took in all of it. The warm sun, the heavenly nectar, the grass gently tickling his bare feet.

Eden cast a glance back to her companion as they continued through the glade. "Be careful, mortal," she chided. "Stay on this path. This garden is not safe for one such as you... Not without me, that is."

The Artist's eyes snapped open and he felt the allure of the place loosen its grip on him. "Of course," he said.

Eden's eyes twinkled, and she fell back into silence.

As they moved through the trees, the sound of running water punctuated the idyllic haze. The Artist looked about and saw a pretty, sparkling stream drifting gayly beside them. Little minnows and other such fish swam about in the currents, and the water carried them on towards what was probably a quaint little pond. The water itself was a bedazzling blue, perfectly reflecting the sky's divine hue and painting a rippling water-colour of the surrounding trees in inverted beauty.

The two creatures continued onwards. As they did so, the glade fell away to be replaced by rolling hills. The path quickly found itself elevated above a steep, but small ravine. At the base, the river continued to run, heading off towards a neat little pond that glinted in the sunlight. Below the surface of the pond, The Artist was sure he could see a titanic snake curled up, basking in the cool embrace of the water. He hastily averted his gaze and continued on his way.

They walked past the river, past the pond, and continued, climbing steadily higher in altitude. The path became a little rocky, and the ravine continued to run alongside it. However, its bottom was now shrouded in tall, damp grass. The Angel of Eden continued onwards in front of The Artist. The snakes wriggled about and hissed into her ears. She would occasionally let out a laugh, or reach back to stroke one of their heads, and The Artist found the entire thing rather unsettling.

One of the larger of Eden's snakes hissed something to her and she stopped. She risked a glance over her shoulder, flashing The Artist her beguiling emerald eyes. In that moment, The Artist lost his footing on the rocky ground and tumbled sideways. He let out a cry of panic as he found himself tumbling down the ravine, several sharp rocks biting into his flesh and clothing. He pulled his arms in

close and gritted his teeth against the pain.

The Artist rolled and jolted toward the bottom of the hill. He broke through a small patch of plant life and tumbled into the basin at the bottom. The long grass embraced him with its damp tendrils, and then, he landed on something. Several hundred some-things.

A chorus of hissing erupted around The Artist's prone form and he felt his breath catch in his throat. The floor below his was wriggling and writhing. Shrill hissing slithered into his ears and he slowly looked around. When he caught sight of the canyon floor he let out a scream. All around him were snakes. One massive, shuddering orgy of snakes. The serpents swirled about with one another, but all seemed to take notice of the hapless human that had fallen into their midst.

He went to get up, but the snakes quickly began to envelope him. Serpents fornicated on his chest, coiled around his wrists and ankles, slithered into his clothes, and coiled around his head. He could feel their dry hides, and closed his eyes. Once again he screamed, but quickly snapped his mouth shut when he felt a snake slither towards the opening.

Then, the snakes began to talk. They spoke in a strange, serpentine language that The Artist could somehow understand. Gaggles of serpents slithered on over and gathered around The Artist's ears and began to speak.

"Ah, another of Eve's long-lost sons comes back to us!"

"Another son of Adam come to fornicate in our garden?"

"The clothes persisted, we see!"

"Why are you here, ape?"

"Did She bring you to us?"

"Is She here?"

"Has The Angel returned?"

"Is the second daughter here?"

"You wish to see the secrets of Eden?"

"You wish to eat of the fruit?"

"There is no need!"

"We know all!"

"We know all that Eden does!"

“You need not eat the forbidden seed!”

“She will show you nothing. Nothing you don’t already know.”

“You are an animal.”

“All animals lust after the same.”

“Food.”

“Wealth.”

“Sex.”

“She will show you nothing, child!”

“The fruit is pointless!”

“The fruit is naught!”

“The fruit is just a form!”

“The fruit is but a shadow!”

“It is nothing but a shallow piece of paradise.”

“A temptation.”

“It is nothing more.”

“And nothing less!”

“You seek the muse of paradise?”

“There is no muse in paradise!”

“What is there to strive for, child?”

“You are already here!”

“Perfection is elusive, but you strive for it nonetheless?”

“Feast your gaze upon perfection now!”

Then a shadow fell upon the mess of serpents. A shadow with two mighty wings splayed out behind it. The serpents looked up fearfully at their monarch, and scampered off back into the grass. The embraces of lust were broken apart, cozy serpents slithered out from The Artist’s clothing, and the entire mass of slithering creatures made a hasty exodus.

The Artist gingerly opened his eyes. He was shaking, tense and traumatised. His eyes were met with the naked form of Eden, standing over him, a hand outstretched. Her scaly wings blocked out the perfect sun, and the snakes affixed to her head gazed at him icily.

“I did warn you,” The Seraph of Paradise said.

The Artist did not reply. He slowly reached out and took her soft hand, and was wrenched back to his feet. He looked around the

ravine, and found no sign of the serpents anymore.

The Angel of Eden flapped her draconic wings, and suddenly, they were standing back upon the path.

The Artist shivered and looked around.

However, before he could speak, The Angel of Eden simply said, “come.”

The two creatures continued onwards. The rocky hill rose to its crescendo, and as they came over the apex of the hill, the great garden of Eden was spread out before them. Rolling, verdant hills coated the land, and all seemed to lead towards the basin below. Standing at the heart of the world was a mighty apple tree. It was the size of a small skyscraper, and millions of plump, perfectly ripe apples hung from its branches. All around the tree was a meadow of beautiful flowers. Their colours were as varied as their species, and The Artist let out a whistle of awe.

The Angel of Eden stopped on the cusp of the hill and turned to face him. “Bedazzling, is it not?” she crooned. Her snakes writhed about and gazed at The Artist with their hungry eyes.

“One way of putting it,” he murmured.

Eden smiled, then began her descent towards the meadow. The Artist fell into step behind her and gingerly made his way down the hill and into the thigh-high legion of flowers. He could hear snakes slithering about out of sight, and kept close to his Angelic guide.

The meadow gave way to the two creatures, and slowly but surely, they came to stand under the protective reach of the apple tree’s aloof branches. The perfect sun was blotted out by the mighty leaves of the all-encompassing tree.

They soon found themselves clambering over titanic roots that had broken free of the ground, and steadily came to the mighty trunk of the tree. Sounds from above drew The Artist’s attention, and he craned his neck and gazed up into the branches above. High above the ground, populating every branch of the mighty plant, were primates. They hooted and jumped from branch to branch, their genitals shrouded by loins made of leaves. They plucked apples from the tree and guzzled them.

However, upon closer inspection, The Artist realised that

the majority of the apes were fornicating with each other. The entire tree was a massive orgy of primates, scented by the juices of the apples they so carelessly glutted themselves on.

The Angel of Eden came to a stop.

The Artist stopped beside her. "So," he said.

"So," The Seraph of Paradise parroted. "Welcome. Here it is, the Rosetta Stone of sin."

The Artist cast his attention back into the branches above. "What now?" he asked.

"Now," The Angel of Eden muttered, walking towards a lower-hanging branch and prying a particularly large apple off of it. "Now you eat. Now you see. See all that paradise can offer your mind, and inspire your soul." She held out the succulent fruit.

Gingerly, The Artist took it. As he did so, the snakes affixed to the angel's head hissed and writhed, rooting their serpentine gazes upon him.

"Go on," The Angel of Eden implored. "Give into temptation."

The Artist gazed down at the apple of Eden he held in his hand. It was perfectly shaped and a heathy size. The red of its flesh was strong and rich, and it smelled faintly sweet. Slowly, he brought it up to his mouth and took a bite. The flesh of the apple gave way to his teeth effortlessly, but without forsaking the satisfying crunch. The apple then proceeded to melt in his mouth, and explode with sweet flavours. It was as if his every tastebud was sent into a state of ecstasy at once.

The Artist closed his eyes and took another bite, and as he did so, he felt his mind begin to cloud. The orgasmic ecstasy of the apple began to spread throughout his body, and he let out a contented sigh.

Then, the visions started, and he collapsed before the mighty tree. He collapsed before the angel. He collapsed before the snakes and the primates, and before he became lost in visions and wonder, he realised they were all the same thing. Every single one of them were but shadows cast by a nebulous Ur of cool blue and brilliant green.

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The infinity of paradise was laid out before The Artist. All the varied forms that made up its entirety. A vortex of pleasures and tranquility hued in colours both real and impossible. Suns set over blooming meadows. Two young lovers kissed for the first time. A child beamed on their birthday morning. A virgin was lost to the march of time...

Water fell around tranquil pools. Naked apes frolicked in each other's embrace. Naked lovers cuddled under a veil of twinkling stars, and sweet fruits bloomed on healthy boughs.

The Artist could see beauty. He could see sin, and desire, and temptation. He could see the very Ur of beauty, the sordid strange thing that cast its shadow over so many places in the multitude of universes. However, he was tethered to Eden, and so he saw only the shadows of beauty cast upon its meadows and trees and coiling serpents. He saw sex and the shining of the sun, sweetness and mingled innuendos. Heard growls of ecstasy and screams of joy...

Then, the visions fell away. The Real rushed to catch The Artist, and he felt long grass embracing him. He could smell the aroma of Eden's nectar. He could feel the cool wind on his face, and then, his eyes fluttered back open.

He was lying on his back, staring up at the mighty tree. The apple was still clutched in his hands, a large bite missing from its flesh. The Angel of Eden still stood beside him, her head of snakes a hissing chorus. However, the plane of Eden had changed. No longer did the sun reign in the sky. Now, the cool canvas of night had fallen. Perfect stars twinkled down from the heavens, like tiny fires, and the cloudless night soothed the slumbering garden.

Steadily, The Artist sat up and clutched his temple.

The Angel of Eden looked down at him. "Well?" she asked.

The Artist pushed himself onto his feet and looked around. "How long was I out?" he asked.

The Angel of Eden shrugged. "Hard to say. Time flows strangely here when it is unobserved. To your mortal faculties I'd say it has been seven hours, but in truth, to the generations of Eden it could have been seven millennia."

The Artist let out a whistle of awe.

“So?” The Seraph of Paradise pressed. “What did you see? Was it useful to your plight? Are you inspired by my beauty?”

The artist looked into Eden’s emerald eyes and smiled. “Inspired?” he asked.

The Angel of Eden fluttered her non-existent eyelashes at him and arched what-should-have-been an eyebrow.

“I came here to see what I’m lacking... What I fail to reproduce in my art...” The Artist trailed off and contemplated The Garden of Eden. “No,” he said finally and flatly.

The Angel of Eden’s lips coiled into a snarl. “No?” she asked.

“No,” The Artist replied. “Not remotely. What I saw, here, and in the little Pomme-de-fever-dream, was nothing but shit. Basic shit.”

The snakes affixed to The Seraph of Paradise’s skull hissed angrily.

“I saw sex, a lot of sex... I saw basic lusts... Forbidden knowledge, nice summer days... but at the end of the day its just pretty pictures and pretty tits, isn’t it? Is that all the great Angel of Eden can offer me? I’d be better off watching a porno for inspiration than coming all the way out here-”

“Enough!” The Angel of Eden snapped. “Lower you tone, mortal! You insult my hospitality!”

“Oh, don’t get all ‘holier-than-thou’ on me now, angel,” The Artist retorted, much of his previous fear in the face of the divine burning away in the face of what it truly was. “You only brought me here because of that little voodoo ritual I pulled! There’s no hospitality involved, I invited myself!”

The Angel of Eden raised her chin indignantly and took in a deep breath. “Very well,” she said finally. “I am sorry that I was not of more help to you, artist...”

The Artist took in a deep breath also. “Sorry,” he said curtly.

“Your apology is not needed, child. As you said, you summoned me...”

The Artist awkwardly shifted his weight from foot to foot and looked around the slumbering garden. “So,” he said. “What now?”

“Now?” The Seraph of Paradise asked. Slowly, she held her

fair hand out to The Artist. “Now I take you back to your London... Now you await the coming of the next of my siblings. The Dark Brother.”

“Wait, D-dark Brother?” The Artist asked.

“Take my hand,” Eden pressed.

The Artist gingerly took the angel’s hand in his, and as he did so, the scales of her draconic wings fell away to reveal two pools of emerald energy. In their midst were coiling snakes, plump apples, and naked primates.

Then, the wings flapped, and The Garden of Eden fell away. The artist went to cry out, but once again found himself smothered by the inky darkness of The Irreal. The blurring pallets of a thousand clandestine worlds soared past him. And then, he was standing in his studio, completely alone...